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ABSTRACT

An instructional unit presents birthday-related activities for use in German classes. Contents include: questions (in German) relating to birthdays; typical birthday expressions; classroom activities; examples of birthday card designs and good luck symbols; German ways to celebrate birthdays; reading section with vocabulary listing; games; a cake recipe; a birthday song; and references. (CB)

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DIE

GEBURTSTAGSFEIER

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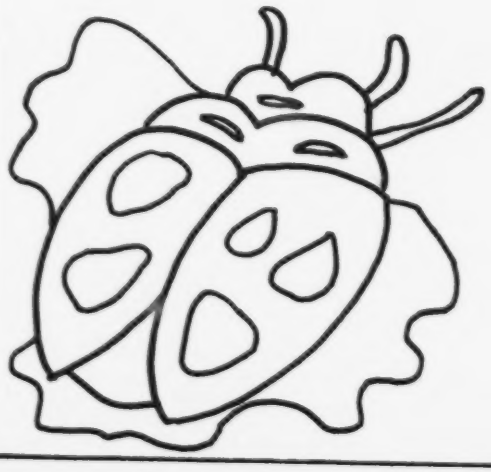
"Geniesse diesen Tag
und recht viel Glück!
Was du versäumst,
kehrt nie zurück!"

Herzlichen Glückwunsch zum Geburtstag!

DIE GEBURTSTAGSFEIER

ALLES GUTE ZUM Geburtstag

Mit den besten Wünschen



Herzlichen Glückwunsch

1. Questions relating to birthdays:

Wann hast du Geburtstag?
Wie alt bist du?
Wann bist du geboren?
Was willst du zum Geburtstag?
Hast du viele Wünsche?
Was wünscht du dir zum Geburtstag?
Den wievielten Geburtstag feierst du heute?
Was ist dein größter Wunsch?
Welchen Wunsch können wir dir zu deinem Geburtstag erfüllen?

2. Typical birthday expressions:

Herzlichen Glückwunsch zum Geburtstag!
Herzliche Glückwünsche zum Geburtstag!
Alles Gute!
Ich gratuliere dir (Ihnen) zum Geburtstag!
(Dir - if written on a card)
Ich gratuliere dir (Ihnen)!
Ich gratuliere!
Gratuliere!
Die besten Wünsche!

Note: The phrase "Herzlichen Glückwunsch," or its plural form "Herzliche Glückwünsche" will actually fit almost every occasion if you want to congratulate someone in German, be it a birthday (ein Geburtstag), an engagement (eine Verlobung), a birth (eine Geburt), a baptism of a baby (eine Taufe), a church confirmation (eine Konfirmation), or an anniversary (ein Jubiläum).

A proper response to any of the above greetings would be a simple:
"Danke!"
"Danke schön!" or
"Vielen Dank!"

3. Classroom activities:

To determine the birthdays of your students you could conduct a simple survey early in the school year. (Please refer to #1: Questions relating to birthdays!) Survey results could be recorded on a room calendar. Summer birthdays can be celebrated on a "half-birthday" basis.

Another method of determining birthdays, which will involve all the students in the classroom, is a learning strategy known as "Birthday Presents."[1] Class members discover the birthdays of other students and try to find at least one whose birthday is in the same month as his or her own. Each student has a piece of paper with numbers from 1 to however many are in the class. Students then proceed to go around the room and ask each other: "Wann hast du Geburtstag?" - "Ich bin am 5. (fünften) Juni geboren."
"Ich bin am 22. (zweiundzwanzigsten) Oktober geboren."

The student interviewing writes this information down after each name. When completed, the teacher asks each one to give the birthdate of a classmate: "Wann hat _____ Geburtstag?"

After the reply, the teacher asks what each student would like to give another one: "Was willst du _____ schenken?"
name, dative

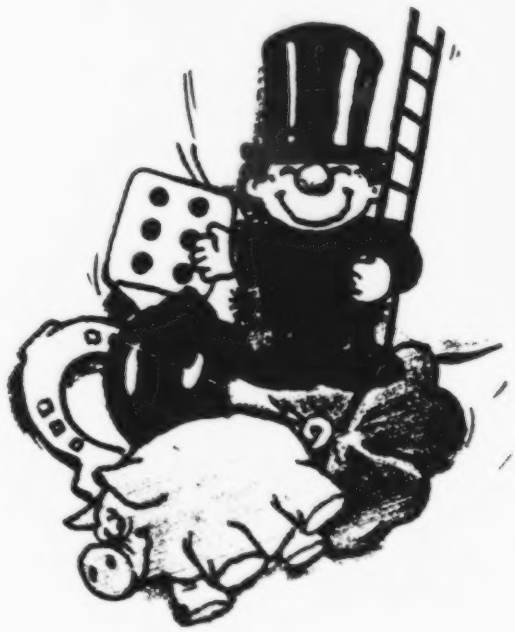
"Ich will ihm/ihr ein(e)(n)_____ schenken."
noun, accusative

The papers would then be collected and the information recorded for future reference.

Many teachers of German like to make a birthday even more special by presenting a card (eine Geburtstagskarte) signed by him or her and possibly all the class members. In many schools a Graphics Department will make up a supply of cards for you for a very small fee, or a simple ditto could be sufficient. You may wish to create your own designs.

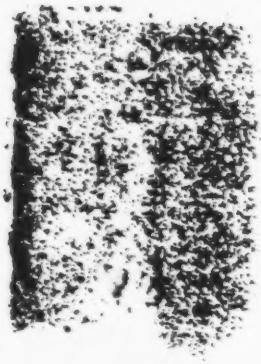
Good luck symbols are frequently found on German greeting cards. Among them are:

der Glückspilz (mushroom)
der Marienkäfer (ladybug)
der Glücksklee (four-leaf clover)
das Hufeisen (horseshoe)
das Glücksschwein (pig)
der Rauchfangkehrer (chimney sweep)
der Würfel (dice)



ZUM GEBURTSTAG

DAS GRÖSSTE PUZZLE DER WELT...

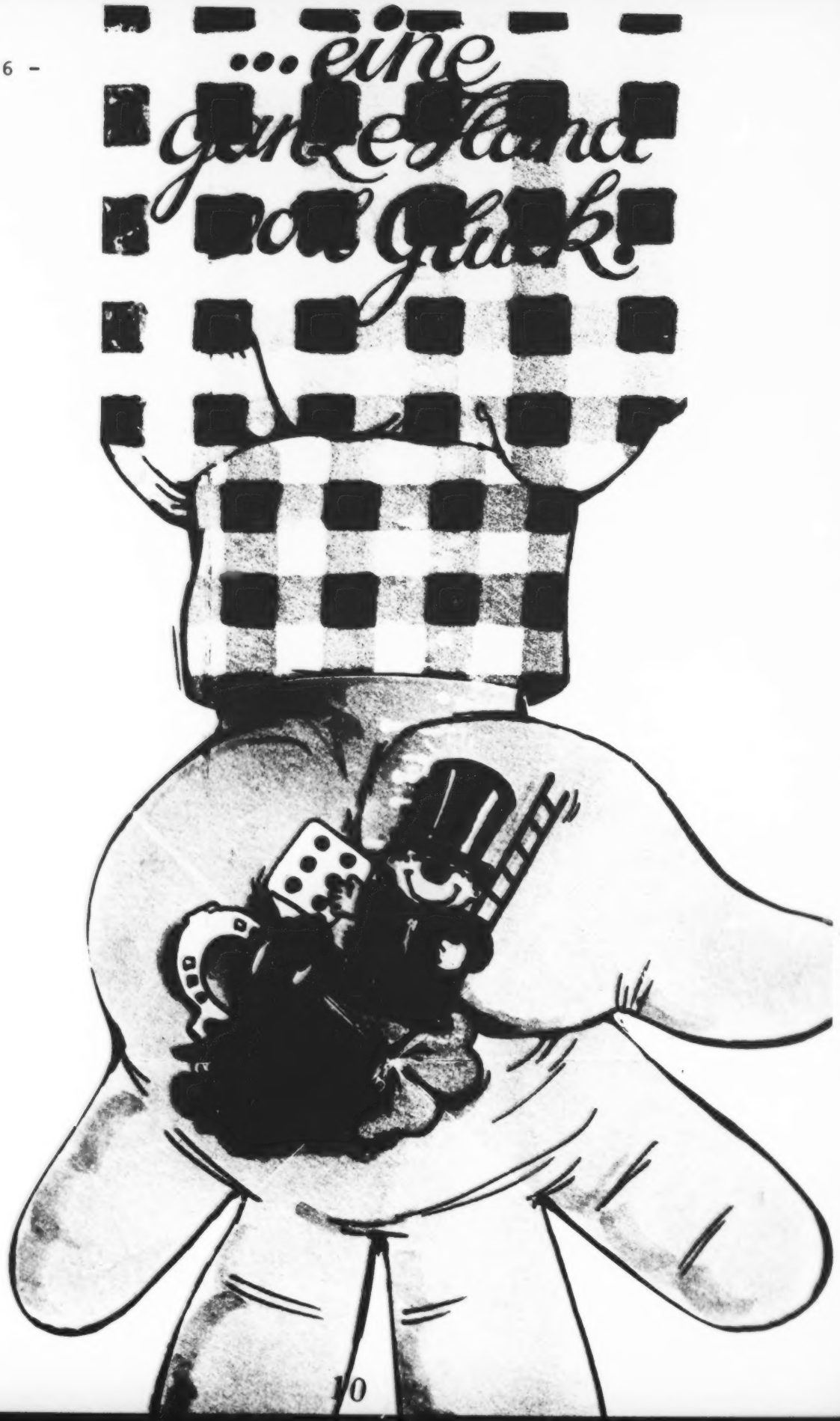


250.888 Teile

ergeben einen Super-Geburtstagskeks

MIT HERZLICHEN GLÜCKWÜNSCHEN

Zum Geburtstag
eine kleine Gabe,
es ist das Beste, was ich habe
und ganz bestimmt kein fauler
Trick...


...eine
ganze Hand
voll Glück!

20
HERZLICHEN GLÜCKWUNSCH
ZUM GEBURTSTAG

Kleine Geschenke
erhalten die Freundschaft
HED.
ALLES GUTE
ZUM Geburtstag

5. How to celebrate a birthday:

Those of you using the textbook series "Unsere Freunde" (Harcourt, Brace Janovich, Inc. 1978) will be familiar with the following information found in Unit 17. Some of the birthday customs practiced in German-speaking countries revolve around "das Geburtstagskind," a name used to refer to you on your birthday, no matter how old you are. Normally there is a birthday cake (eine Geburtstagstorte) as well as a birthday table (ein Geburtstagstisch). This table will usually be covered with a colorful cloth (einer bunten Tischdecke). It is decorated with flowers (Blumen, Blumenstrauß), gifts (Geschenken), and birthday mail (Geburtstagskarten). In most cases the table is prepared early in the day as the birthday really begins as soon as the Geburtstagskind gets up! Often the cake has very special decorations - especially for the children. "The cake has a wooden ring around it with candles, one for each year plus an extra one - 'das Lebenslicht'."[2] The extra candle is often larger than the rest and is normally placed in the middle. It represents the year to come.

6. Reading selection with vocabulary:

The following reading selection can be used in conjunction with this unit in order to stimulate classroom conversation or essay writing:

GEBURTSTAGSFEIER IN DEUTSCHLAND

Heute ist ein großer Festtag[1] in der Familie Baumann Sabine und Peter haben Geburtstag.[2] Warum haben beide am gleichen[3] Tag Geburtstag? Sie sind Zwillinge![4]

Was für ein froher[5] Tag! Sie stehen[6] schon zeitig[7] auf,[6] aber die Mutter ruft:[8] "Bleibt[9] in euren Zimmern[10] bis ich euch hole!"[11]

Endlich dürfen[12] sie ins Wohnzimmer![13] "Hoch sollen sie leben!"[14] singt die ganze Familie[15] als sie hereinkommen.[16]
"Frohen Geburtstag!"[17]
"Alles Gute im neuen Lebensjahr!"[18]
"Viel Schönes!"[19]
"Viel Glück!"[20]
"Mach's gut!"[21]
"Bleib' gesund!"[22]
"Lerne fleißiger!"[23]
"Sei anständig!"[24]
Die Wünsche werden mit Küssen[25] und Händeschütteln[26] besiegelt.[27]

Auch der Geburtstagstisch sieht festlich aus![28] In der Mitte ist der Lichterkranz[29] mit vierzehn Kerzen[30] und dem Lebenslicht.[31] Ein Blumenstrauß[32] steht neben der leckeren[33] Geburtstagstorte. Die Geschenke[34] liegen ausgebreitet[35] auf dem Tisch: Jeans für beide, ein Hemd[36] für Peter und eine Bluse[37] für Sabine, Tennisschläger[38] und Bälle und natürlich[39] auch ein Buch.

Das Frühstück[40] ist heute ganz besonders:[41] Es gibt Gugelhupf[42] und Kakao!

Dann geht's schnell in die Schule![43]

Am Nachmittag[44] kommen die Freunde zur Party. Alle sitzen um den festlich geschmückten[45] Tisch und genießen[46] die Torte mit viel Schlagsahne[47] und Kaffee. Das schmeckt![48]

Dann spielt man und tanzt[49] zu Schallplatten.[50] "Topfschlagen"[51] ist besonders lustig![52]

Nach[53] zwei Stunden[54] gehen alle nach Hause.[55] Sie schütteln den Eltern die Hand und bedanken sich:[56] "Auf Wiedersehen,[57] Herr und Frau Baumann! Vielen Dank für die Einladung![58] Wir hatten viel Spaß![59] Prima Party!"[60]

VOCABULARY:

1. feast, holiday
2. birthday
3. same
4. twins
5. happy
6. get up
7. early
8. calls
9. stay
10. rooms
11. get
12. are allowed
13. living room
14. (birthday wish)
15. whole family
16. come in
17. happy birthday
18. the best wishes for the new year of your life!
19. many beautiful things
20. lots of luck
21. take it easy
22. stay healthy
23. study harder
24. be nice
25. kisses
26. shaking hands
27. sealed, confirmed

28. looks festive

29. wreath of lights (wooden ring with candles)

30. candles

31. "life light": a special candle representing one's life. At each birthday it is placed in the middle of the wreath and lit.

32. bunch of flowers, bouquet

33. delicious, appetizing

34. presents

35. spread out

36. shirt

37. blouse

38. tennis racket

39. of course

40. breakfast

41. very special

42. a traditional coffee cake in ring form

43. and then: quickly off to school!

44. afternoon

45. festively decorated

46. enjoy

47. whipped cream

48. what a treat! (literally: that tastes!)

49. dances

50. records

51. "hitting the pot" (a game)

52. especially funny

53. after

54. hours

55. home

56. thank

57. see you again! (good-bye!)

58. invitation

59. lots of fun

60. great party!

7. PARTY GAMES (Gesellschaftsspiele):

It is a tradition in the German-speaking countries to play games at birthday parties and other festive occasions. For this purpose the host will have prepared gifts in advance. These little presents are used as prizes in the various party games. Even for adults, these games can be a lot of fun and provide for a relaxed atmosphere.

One of such games that people of all ages still enjoy playing is "Topfschlagen."

TOPFSCHLAGEN:

One of the players has to cover his eyes with a scarf and takes a ladle in his hand. The others hide a little present under a pot and place it in some distance from the "blind" player who then has to look for it by touching things with his ladle. As soon as he comes closer to the pot, everybody shouts, "warm," or "wärmer," depending on the distance to the pot. If he gets further away from the target they say, "lau, kalt, kälter," or "eiskalt." As soon as he hits the pot, however, they all yell, "heiß!" and he is allowed to take off his eye-cover and open his present.

STILLE POST:

The players are sitting in a circle. One of them starts by whispering a message into his neighbor's ear who in turn whispers it to the person next to him. For example such a message could be: "Gib Mary einen Kuß!" (Give Mary a kiss!) or "Hüpf auf einem Bein um den Kreis herum!" (Hop around the circle on one leg!) The last person to get the message is the one who has to perform whatever is demanded. Often the contents of the message changes when things are misunderstood - but this only adds to the fun.

8. German cake recipe: TORTE

1 yellow cake mix
1 pkg. vanilla pudding (not instant)- cooked and cooled
2 sticks unsalted butter
9 Tbsp. sugar
1 tsp. instant coffee
1 tsp. rum extract
1 tsp. cocoa
1/2 cup slivered almonds (opt.)
1/2 jar apricot preserves

Directions: Bake yellow cake, let cool. Beat butter. Slowly add sugar, beating constantly. Add cooled pudding, rum, coffee, cocoa, and almonds. Cut cake rounds in half.
First layer: frosting
Second layer: preserves
Third layer: frosting
Frost whole cake, refrigerate over night. Serve ice cold!

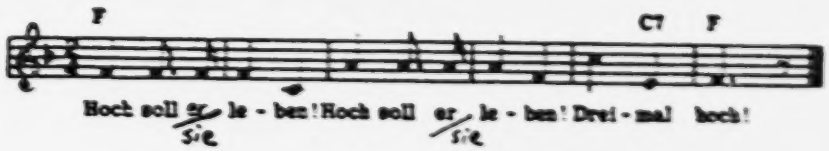
In some cases teachers celebrate birthdays of students by having the "Geburtstagskind" take a special seat in front of the class. All class members file by, shake hands, greet the "Geburtstagskind" in German, and then a small "Geburtstagsfeier" is held for 15 minutes or so.

The teacher or class members may have brought in refreshments and possibly even a real "Geburtstagstorte"!

The birthday activities for the classroom are numerous.

There are several songs that can be used to celebrate a birthday in the classroom. One of the most popular ones is called: "Hoch soll er leben!"

9. HOCH SOLL ER/SIE LEBEN: (a birthday song: guests can invent their own variations by adding new lines.)



Variations: Groß soll er werden, groß soll er werden, dreimal so groß!

... stark, schön, gescheit, schlank, etc.

10. References:

Many supplementary materials regarding birthdays are available and appropriate to a variety of activities and levels.

"Deutsch Macht Spaß": A first year German Reader/Workbook published by Amsco School Publications, Inc., has two good articles for beginners.

"Deutsch als Fremdsprache IA" by Ute Kirchhelle, published by Ernst Klett Verlag - Stuttgart, has an entire section on the birthday in Unit 9.

"So sind die Deutschen I": A multi-media production with filmstrips and cassettes, put out by EMC Corporation of St. Paul, MN, has devoted section 6 to "Vaters Geburtstags-geschenk" and is quite well done.

The AATG Printed Materials Center has a series of six "Hörspiele" entitled "Dr. Winkelmann und seine Putzfrau." The sixth play is called "Der Geburtstag" and should be fun to use in the classroom.

The Goethe Institute also has a large selection of materials which have exercises related to the birthday.

Footnotes:

1. "Strategies for Communication" - Book II
   Nebraska Department of Education, Susan Byrd
   Exercise 13 Page 13

2. "Unsere Freunde" Unit 17 Page 180
   Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1978

3. "Deutsch Macht Spaß" - a First-Year German
   Reader/Workbook by Rey and Maloof 1979
   Amsco School Publications, Inc.
   Unit 11 Page 32